

Preface

This preface is short – with the thought that it might be read!

The First Edition (1985) of *Practical Statistics* expected the reader to put data into algebraic equations with a pocket calculator and look-up statistical tables – the traditional approach of the time. Nowadays, computer-based statistics packages do not display equations or statistical tables and they mostly seem to assume that the user is expert in statistical terminology. Personally, I have run into numerous difficulties with the ‘jargon blizzard’. And I have frequently felt totally inadequate in not understanding something that the package manuals imply is ‘easy’. I know other people who have struggled similarly. It seems there is quite a gap between finding out about statistical methods and ideas from a traditional textbook, and putting them into practice on the screen.

This Second Edition aims to bridge this gap. It assumes the reader wants to use statistics in a responsible way, but has little interest in processing data with formulae and a pocket calculator. It is therefore for those who want to go onto the computer screen straightaway and become familiar with the statistical methods that can be used there – and the basic ideas behind them. The text is intended to be worked through as a course, and thereafter used as a reference manual.

Only after many enquiries did I decide to settle on MINITAB* as the particular statistics package to be used throughout the revised text. There are several other good statistics packages that I could have chosen, but MINITAB has become so widely available and accepted as a standard that anyone with access to a PC or Apple computer should also have access to MINITAB. At least that is my opinion. The pocket calculator of yesterday has become the MINITAB of today and tomorrow.

I want to acknowledge help from statistician colleagues at the University of Glasgow, particularly Professor Adrian Bowman, Dr James Currall and Dr Jim Kay. However, any faults are my doing and responsibility, and not theirs. I am also much indebted to MINITAB Ltd for permission to copy from their software and for my enrolment in their Authors’ Assistance Program. Other permissions to use copyright materials are acknowledged at appropriate places in the text. Finally, I thank the publishers for their guidance and patience, and hope that you, the reader, get some benefit from what follows.

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